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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the validity of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in predicting first-year student involvement in extracurricular social and athletic activities during the 1981 summer session at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. A total of 14 males and 13 females completed the Rosenberg Scale and an 8-item questionnaire concerning their participation in extracurricular activities. When the Rosenberg Scale was scored using a Likert-type method, significant correlations appeared among the self-esteem score, the number of new friends met at college, and the number of social functions and contacts subjects had during an average week. No correlation was found between self-esteem and membership in clubs and organizations or extracurricular athletic activities. Since the study used such a small number of summer quarter first-year students, who were not necessarily representative of first-year college students as a population, the results cannot be generalized to all first-year students. Further study of the use of Likert-type instruments to control for social desirability among subjects is recommended. (TJH)

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The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale as a Predictor of the Extra-Curricular Activities of Summer College Freshmen

Gary Joe Morgan

July, 1981

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Introduction

Recently, researchers have been focusing upon the positive benefits which one receives in participation and involvement in extra-curricular activities, whether it be athletic or non-athletic (Nicholson, 1979; Rosenberg, 1965; Snyder and Kivlin, 1975). Rosenberg (1965) viewed participation as arising from a psychological construct of self-esteem and is supported in studies by (Haven, 1975; Rehberg, 1969; Yarworth & Gauthier, Jr., 1978). Nicholson (1979) and Snyder & Kivlin (1975) approached the development of self-esteem from a social construct, while others compromise and view its development as being a blend of the two polar perspectives (Tippett & Silber, 1965).

Regardless of the locus of development of self-esteem, these researchers all support the premise that positive things do occur as a result of participation in extra-curricular activities. Leadership, reinforcement of self-esteem, attainment of higher self-esteem, higher levels of interest, and quality affective experiences are but a few of the tangible benefits one can receive from peers.

Participation in extra-curricular activities as a predictor to success in later life has emerged only recently. Jandris (1980, p. 49) cites a pair of studies conducted by the American Testing Services and the College Entrance Exam Board (CEEB). The American Testing Service compared 4 factors thought to be possible and valid predictors of student success in later years; (1) achievement in extra-curricular activities, (2) high grades in high school, (3) high grades in college, and (4) high scores on the ACT. Their findings indicated that the only factor that could accurately predict success in later life was achievement in extra-curricular activities.

The CEEB measured the accuracy of the SAT in predicting career success in a person upon graduation from college. Findings indicated that there was virtually no correlation between SAT scores and success in later life. The report did conclude, however, that those students who had many hobbies and interests, or were active in extra-curricular activities were the ones most likely to be successful (Jandris, 1980, p. 50). Involvement in extra-curricular activities thus may hold benefits for any participant in the present and in the future.

The need to use accurate instruments to assess who is most likely to participate and who is not, becomes important to educators at all levels. With the benefits already established through participation, we should develop activities around the interests, needs, and concerns of all, so that all are offered the chance to participate.

Rosenberg (1965) and Yarworth & Gauthier, Jr. (1978) have indicated that those most likely to participate are those possessing positive self-esteem. They view self-esteem as a predictor of involvement and participation in extra-curricular activities. Rehberg (1965) goes as far as saying that positive self-esteem may be antecedent to other variables as they relate to both the athletic and nonathletic experiences of an individual while in school.

One can see the need for valid test instruments to measure self-esteem is paramount in looking at predictive success in an individual. If positive self-

esteem relates to participation in extra-curricular activities; which in turn, relates to later success in life, then indeed we need valid assessment of self-esteem.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine if the Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) is a valid instrument in predicting freshmen involvement and participation in college extra-curricular activities.

Review of Related Literature

Rosenberg (1965) found that people with low self-esteem were the least likely to become involved or participate in any extra-curricular activities. This is primarily a decision based upon the person's attitudes towards people and the impression s/he makes on them. This non-participatory attitude held by low self-esteem people may be related in some way to a person's reinforcement orientation. Fish & Karabenick (1971) found that people who had high self-esteem also had internal orientation, as far as their perceived locus of reinforcements. These studies may indicate why high self-esteem people are more willing to join clubs, go to parties, participate in sports, etc. These people may not need the external reinforcement that a low self-esteem person needs in order to feel successful.

Studies conducted by Snyder & Kivlin (1975) and Nicholson (1979) found that athletes tend to have more ambition, greater psychological well-being, and a positive self-image of themselves as compared to non-athletes. Yarworth & Gauthier, Jr. (1978) indicated that positive self-esteem is causal, in nature, to participation in extra-curricular activities. Rehberg (1969) suggests that positive self-esteem may be antecedent to other variables as they relate to both the athletic and nonathletic experiences of an individual while in school. The latter two studies would tend to support Rosenberg's findings that people with high self-esteem are the most likely to participate and to become involved in extra-curricular activities.

Very few educators would dispute the notion that having positive self-esteem is of benefit to an individual. Abraham Maslow recognized this when constructing his hierarchy of human needs. Only when an individual feels secure in his relationships with those around him, a characteristic of positive self-esteem, does the task of learning become easier. Recent studies (Bell & Ward, 1980; Campbell, 1981; Haven, 1975; Levinson, 1980; Rosenberg, 1965; Yarworth & Gauthier, Jr., 1978) have shown the vital importance of positive self-esteem in achieving academic and social success.

Recently considerable debate has arisen concerning the measurement of self-esteem and the measuring instruments. Robinson & Shaver (1973) indicated that the central problem in self-esteem research is validity. Moran et al. (1978, p. 548) found lack of uniformity in even defining the term, self-esteem. This has led to an inability by investigators to develop instruments or scales that constitute valid operational representations of the hypothesized construct.

Shavelson et al. (1976) found that often the same instruments were being used to portray different constructs about the self, and different instruments were being used to measure the same construct. Watkins (1978) suggested that self-esteem is like to change according to various experiences an individual

receives and the various roles he is called upon to assume. Watkins contends that current instruments measure long-lasting estimates of global self-esteem, not momentary, situation-specific evaluation. This is the area often neglected in the current testing instruments. Silber & Tippett (1965) classified the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale as being global in its assessment of self-esteem. Some researchers question its validity to accurately assess self-esteem.

Nunnally (1967, pp. 61-66) argues that the small number of items and forced rectangular distributions of items in Guttmen scales are artificial and likely to produce only gross, ordinal distinctions among people. He remains to be convinced that a Guttman scale has any empirical advantage of measuring self-esteem. Tippett & Silber (1965, pp. 323-329) suggest that validity results from any self-esteem instrument are best questionable for several reasons; subjective-objective frame of reference, stability over time, stability within self-image areas, stability across interpersonal situations, and stability within different self-structures. Tippett & Silber (1965, p. 1043) believe the Rosenberg scale is more susceptible to biases such as present a good facade. They also have concluded (1965, p. 1050) that the Rosenberg scale reflects a subjective statement by a subject of his own evaluation of his self-esteem and is, therefore, a measure which seems to facilitate presenting a positive facade if the subject has this need.

The scale is not without its positive points, however. In the same study by Silber & Tippett (1965) they found the following intercorrelations among measures of self-esteem. The Rosenberg scale to the Repertory Procedure is +.67 and to the Self-Image Questionnaire is +.83. They also found a test-retest correlation over two weeks of .85 (N=28). Robinson & Shaver (1973, p. 52) indicate that the scale has good construct and predictive validity for such a brief scale.

Rosenberg (1965) defends the scale by associating scores on the scale with other data in a theoretical meaningful way. He set forth three theoretical relations to prove his scale: (1) depression, (2) psychophysiological indicators, and (3) peer-group reputation. He discussed the proof of these relations in his book, Society and The Adolescent Self-Image.

In conclusion, the valid measurement of self-esteem may be of tremendous value in predicting not only academic, but social success in an individual. Properly used, it could have tremendous diagnostic potential in predicting consequences for people, based upon their assumptions about themselves, which hopefully in turn, create positive actions.

Statement of the Hypothesis

In the review of literature concerning self-esteem as a predictor to participation in extra-curricular activities; it was hypothesized that, summer quarter college freshmen who have high self-esteem, as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, would have a higher involvement in extra-curricular social and athletic activities than freshmen having lower self-esteem.

Definitions

1. Self-esteem
   - The liking and respect for oneself which has some realistic basis (Robinson & Shaver, 1973, p. 45).

   - The feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction a person has about himself which reflect the relationship between the self-image and the ideal self-image (Silber & Tippett, 1965, p. 1017).

   - The evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself: it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful, and worthy. In short, self-esteem is a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds towards himself. It is a subjective experience which the individual conveys to others by verbal reports and other expressive behavior (Coopersmith, 1967, pp. 4-5).

2. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965)
   - Consists of ten items which are answered on a four point scale from strongly disagree, although they are scored by Rosenberg only as agreement or disagreement (Robinson & Shaver, 1973, p. 81).

3. Extra-curricular Activities
   - Include any and all non-required athletic, non-athletic, and social activities. Such things as; sports, organizations, dates, movies, clubs, etc. would all be examples of extra-curricular activities.

4. Validity
   - The degree to which a test measures what it is intended to measure; a test is valid for a particular purpose and for a particular group (Gay, 1981, p. 438).

Method

Subjects

The sample was selected from the population of summer quarter college freshmen (1981) at Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio. Two assistant hall directors were each given 25 instruments to hand out to any freshman that was available in their respective dormitories. A total of 27 subjects responded to the instruments; 14 from the girls' dormitory and 13 from the boys' dormitory. The sample represented 4.5% of the 600 freshmen.

Instrument

The instrument used was divided into two parts: part one consisted of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; and part two was an eight-item self-constructed questionnaire (See Appendix A). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was chosen because of its brevity, reliability, face validity, and because of the extensive background work by Rosenberg (1965). Silber & Tippett (1965) found this scale to produce a test-retest correlation over two weeks of .85(N=28). The ten item self-esteem scale was analyzed, in this study, for reliability and was found to have an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.92. Rosenberg (1965) admits that "logical" validation or "force validity" is not sufficient to establish the adequacy of the scale, but defends its use through extensive studies reported in his book (1965).

An eight item questionnaire made up part two of the instrument. Information gathered from the questions (See Appendix A) fell into one of three areas: (1) participation in extra-curricular activities; (2) number and closeness of new friends met at college; and (3) general background information.

Procedure

The Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale and the eight question instrument were condensed into a single page questionnaire and was used to gather information about self-esteem, participation in extra-curricular activities, and general background information. Fifty copies were duplicated; with 25 given to an assistant boys' dormitory director, and 25 given to an assistant girls; dormitory director. They were given instructions to distribute the instruments to any freshmen living in their dormitory. Completed instruments were then given back to the assistant hall directors.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was scored in three different ways. In the first, subjects were scored on a Likert-type or Summated Rating Scale with 1 to 4 points being assigned to each question. One point was assigned to a response indicating the least self-esteem; 4 points were assigned to a response that indicated the most self-esteem; 2 and 3 points were assigned to the intermediary responses.

In the second scoring method a subject's response to each question was assigned the value of either a "0" or a "1". A "0" was assigned if the response was towards a low self-esteem direction; a "1" was assigned if the response was towards a high self-esteem direction. In the third and final scoring method, subjects were categorized as having high self-esteem (answered 6 or more questions in the positive self-esteem direction), average/middle (answered 5 questions in the positive self-esteem direction) or low self-esteem (answered 4 or fewer questions towards the positive self-esteem direction). This latter scoring method closely paralleled Rosenberg's work in 1965).

Agreement with questions 1,2,4,6, and 7 on the Rosenberg Scale indicated a response in a high self-esteem direction; while disagreement with questions 3,5,8,9 and 10 indicated a response in a high self-esteem direction (see Appendix A).

Participation in extra-curricular activities was high if the subject participated in 3 or more activities per week, medium; if subject participated in 1 or 2 activities per week, and low: if no activity participation in a week.

Results

It was hypothesized that college freshmen having high self-esteem, as measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, would have higher involvement in extra-curricular social and athletic activities than students who had lower self-esteem.

Use of a Chi square analysis (See Table 1) indicated that there was a relationship between self-esteem score, how many new friends a person had met at college, and the number of social functions/contacts a person had in the average week. There was no relationship between self-esteem score and participation in extra-curricular athletic activities membership in clubs and organizations.

Table 1

Chi Square Analysis of the Relationship Between Self-Esteem Score and Four Social-Athletic Indicators of College Freshmen

Indicators

Chi Square Analysis	Question 13[a] (Number of new friends met)	Question 16[b] (Social functions/ contacts)	Question 17[c] (Extra-curricular athletic activities)	Question 18[d] (Clubs, organizations, etc.)
Chi Square	15.56	37.34	3.56	5.25
df	6	14	10	8
Significance	0.0163	0.0007	0.9650	0.7307
Kendall's Tau B w/(p)	0.52 0.0029	0.46 0.0037	0.24 0.0833	0.21 0.1185
Kendall's Tau C w/(p)	0.25 0.0029	0.35 0.0037	0.18 0.0833	0.15 0.1185

Questions

[a]After arriving at college how many new friends have you met?

[b]How many social functions/contacts do you average in a week here at college?

[c]Here at college, how many extra-curricular athletic activities do you participate in, on the average, during the week?

[d]Since arriving at college, how many clubs, organizations, fraternities, sororities, etc. have you joined?

When the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was scored using a Likert-type method there were significant correlations between self-esteem score, number of new friends met at college (r=.66, N=27, p less than 0.001) and number of social functions/contacts a person had in the average week (r=.47, N=27, p=0.007). However, there was found to be no correlation between self-esteem score and participation in extra-curricular athletic activities (r=.29, N=27, p=0.072), membership in clubs, organizations, etc. (r=18, N=27, p=0.185). Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of these variables.

Table 2
Means & Standard Deviations of Self-Esteem Score and Activity Indicators

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Likert-like Self-Esteem Score	27	31.0	5.9
#13 (Number of new friends met)	27	8.3	1.6
#16 (Social functions/contacts)	27	3.4	2.2
#17 (Extra-Curricular athletic activities)	27	1.6	2.0
#18 (Clubs, organizations, etc.)	27	1.2	1.6

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the above results, it was concluded that higher self-esteem students, as measured by the Rosenberg Scale, showed higher involvement in meeting new friends within a new environment (college) and had a higher involvement in social functions/contacts. In this particular group of students; high self-esteem students did not report any greater participation in extra-curricular activities and membership in clubs, organizations or participation in athletics than low self-esteem students.

Thus, the original hypothesis was partly supported in the results. High self-esteem students, did show higher involvement in extra-curricular social and athletic activities. Because this study used such a small number of summer quarter freshmen that were not necessarily representative of college freshmen, in general, the results cannot be generalized to all summer quarter college freshmen. The result of no relationship between self-esteem score, participation in extra-curricular athletics, and social organizations may be due, in part, to a decreased offering of these activities during the summer months. However, in review of the results, it would appear that research into the use of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale as a predictor to involvement in extra-curricular activities is warranted. More investigation is needed using a self-report instrument, such as the Rosenberg scale, to control for responses arising from social desirability in answering the questions.

Abstract

This study investigated the validity of the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale in predicting student involvement in extra-curricular social and athletic activities. Summer quarter (1981) freshmen students at Bowling Green State University were selected to participate. Subjects completed the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and an eight-item questionnaire regarding participation in extra-curricular social and athletic activities. When the Rosenberg scale was scored using a Likert-type method, there were significant correlations between self-esteem score, number of new friends met at college ($r=.66$, $N=27$, p less than 0.001), and number of social functions/contacts a person had on the average in a week ($r=.47$, $N=27$, $p=0.007$). No correlation was found between self-esteem, participation in extra-curricular athletic activities ($r=.29$, $N=27$, $p=0.072$), and membership in clubs, organizations, etc. ($r=18$, $N=27$, $p=0.185$). It was suggested that more investigation be done when using a Likert-type instrument to control for social desirability when subjects answer questions.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

I. Directions - Please respond to each of the 10 statesments listed below. Place a 1, 2, 3, or 4 in the space preceding each statement to indicate your strong agreement, agreement, disagreement, or strong disagreement to each statement.

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly Disagree

©Self-Esteem Scale [1]

_____ 1) I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.

_____ 2) I feel that I have a umber of good qualities.

_____ 3) All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

_____ 4) I am able to do things as well as most other people.

_____ 5) I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

_____ 6) I take a positive attitude toward myself.

_____ 7) On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

_____ 8) I wish I could have more respect for myself.

_____ 9) I certainly feel useless at times.

_____10) At times I think I am no good at all.

[1] (Rosenberg 1965). Rights reserved by Princeton University Press.

II. Directions - Please respond to each of the following questions by writing the number in the space provided which you feel best answers the question.

Choices (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9+)

_____ 1) Before coming to college how many close friends did you have at home?

_____ 2) How many hours today have you spent or will spend studying?

_____ 3) After arriving at college how many new friends have you met?

_____ 4) Of these new friends, how many would you consider to be close friends?

_____ 5) Before coming to college how many activities, sports, clubs, organizations, etc. did you participate in during the school year?

_____ 6) How many social functions/contacts do you average in a week here at college? (Examples might include; parties, dates, movies, going for a pizza with someone, going downtown, etc.)

_____ 7) Here at college, how many extra-curricular athletic activities do you participate in, on the average, during the week?

_____ 8) Since arriving at college how many clubs, organizations, fraternities, sororities, etc. have you joined?

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